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so fast, that an occasional meeting of the Association in every section of the country is necessary in order that the whole country may be kept in touch with the work. We hope, therefore, in the years to come that we shall meet the members of the North Carolina Association as guests, if not as hosts, but better still as fellow members of the American Library Association.

And in conclusion, I regret that I am unable to express more eloquently and fluently our thanks and appreciation of your hospitality. If this were a convention of ministers, or lawyers, or teachers, you might reasonably expect more from its presiding officer, but I beg you to remember that all librarians have acquired perforce a habit of silence. In this annual conference we have our one chance to unloosen our tongues, but unfortunately the practice will come too late for the present need. Again, gentlemen, I thank you in behalf of the American Library Association for your cordial welcome and greetings.

### FIRST SESSION

(Ball Room, Battery Park Hotel, Friday Morning, May 24, 1907)

The first general session of the Asheville Conference was called to order by the president, Clement W. Andrews, at 9.50 o'clock, and the twenty-ninth annual meeting of the American Library Association was declared open and ready for business.

The PRESIDENT: The report of the proceedings of the meeting of 1906 has been printed and distributed to members. Unless objection is now made, it will stand approved. The Chair hears no objection, and the report is approved.

The Executive board has arranged a program for this meeting, of which printed copies will be distributed. This program will be followed strictly except as the Association may determine otherwise, and except also for such minor changes in order as may seem desirable.

According to custom, an address from

the president is placed first. Before beginning, however, I desire to repeat my congratulations of last night, and our thanks to our hosts that we meet under such pleasant circumstances. I would add congratulations that we meet in such goodly numbers, and would especially express our profound thankfulness that our losses since the time of the last meeting have been so few.

The program includes two chief topics: the first, the Library movement in the South; and the second, the Use of books. The latter is the subject of my address.

### THE USE OF BOOKS.

The "Use of books" is neither an equivalent of the whole subject of "Library work" nor is it a question solely of the information desk or reference department. It excludes on the one hand, many important problems of library administration, and includes, on the other hand, many which have to be considered in connection with nearly every department. It affects directly the planning of the building, the equipment of the rooms, the selection of the staff, the selection of the books, cataloging them, bringing them to the notice of readers, influencing the choice for home reading as well as for use in the library, the granting of special privileges such as immediate access to the shelves, and the provision of special accommodations, such as rooms for photographic work, drafting, dictation and typewriting.

These questions affect library administration fundamentally, and should be decided by the application of certain principles, though with due regard also to other factors, such as scope, location, and means, which will vary with each library. Many special applications and many of the considerations affecting them will be brought out in the papers which are to follow, but the central idea should be that expressed so tersely and accurately by the motto of the Association: "The best reading for the greatest number at the least cost."

Notwithstanding Dr Hale was my pastor

for thirty years, I believe that it is necessary to look down as well as up, if we would not stumble; and that it is sometimes well to look back in order to make sure that our view forward does not deviate from the right direction. So from a review of the experience of the first thirty years of the A. L. A. some idea of the lines of progress in general use of books ought to be obtainable. In his presidential address at Montreal in 1900, Dr Thwaites made such a review. It is true that it professed to be limited to the developments of the preceding decade, but many of these developments began long before 1890. Indeed it is always difficult to determine when or where the seed was sown or first sprouted. Many of the activities which Dr Thwaites chronicles deal directly or indirectly with our subject. The list includes the work of state library commissions, of library schools and training classes, library advertising, children's rooms, rooms for the blind, access to the shelves, cooperation with teachers, and inter-library loans. Looking over the field to-day we can add traveling libraries, lecture work, the work of women's clubs, that of the correspondence schools, the organization of a national bibliographical society, cooperation with museums, and last, but not least, the establishment of A. L. A. headquarters.

Surely with so many avenues of development opening before them, library authorities may well feel that guiding principles are necessary. One thing is certain, that the opinions, expectations, and demands of the public will furnish no such guide, for these manifest the utmost variance possible. There are, for instance, those whose business interests are affected. Some publishers and book sellers believe that the presence of a book in a library hinders its sale to individuals. The belief is natural and in some cases probably correct, though it is also most probably true that the book trade as a whole is helped rather than hurt by the multiplication of libraries. This personal view of the matter is not peculiar

to publishers and book sellers. The same objection has been urged, and urged strongly, by a professional translator and bibliographer who insisted that public libraries should do gratuitously nothing which would furnish remunerative labor to citizens.

On the other hand, and curiously enough on the same day, the management of the John Crerar library was severely criticised because it would not furnish a translation of a business correspondence in Spanish. It was not a case of one or two letters received accidentally, but the regular correspondence of a month; and the translation was not asked as a favor, but in the belief, evidently held in good faith, that it was one of the proper functions of the staff of a public library to act as clerks for the citizens.

Beliefs still more strange are sometimes held. I suppose that every large library can recall instances, though it may be that our experience has been peculiar. The necessity for the application of principles and the consideration of other factors has been stated, but it is not difficult to eliminate some of the functions proposed by the public, as for instance, when asked by a woman to begin in her behalf a suit for damages against a street railroad company; or when asked by detectives, both amateur and professional, to assist in watching readers; or when asked by a man to help him in obtaining a wife. After eliminating such extremes, there are still left enough questions to perplex those interested in the increase of the general use of good books, and the proper development of libraries as aids to such use.

The attitude of mind of a librarian towards a suggestion for any particular piece of library work should be expressed by the question, "Why not?" If something is wanted by the public it should be furnished, unless the reasons against doing so are stronger than those in favor. This statement may seem a mere platitude, for it is assumed that this open-mindedness is a national characteristic, and that the an-

swer of a suggestion by the statement that "it never has been done" is peculiarly British or foreign. Is not the latter attitude, however, largely official rather than national? It can be observed in much of the public life of America, and as public institutions libraries should be on their guard against it. One of the greatest benefits of these annual conferences is the aid they give in keeping us out of ruts.

Now there may be, of course, some very good, even unanswerable reasons, why not. These fall into two classes; those which are accidental and those which are essential. The first class includes limitations imposed by the scope of the particular library, or by the means or by the extent of space at its command. These are always present, but in such varying degrees as to make valueless any detailed treatment of them here: though the question, for instance, of how much time a library should give an individual reader is one which occurs constantly in practice, and so far as I know, has been very little discussed; and the question of the duplication of books, though much discussed, is far from settled.

The second class of limitations are those which are due to the character of books themselves. These limitations are often disregarded by the public, and sometimes overlooked by the library staff. Libraries are somewhat too apt to adopt as their motto the oft-quoted saying of Terence: "*Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto*," whereas they should make it fit the case by altering it to "*Bibliothecarius sum; nihil de libris, etc.*"

The great value of books as records of human knowledge, as depositories of the best of human thought and feeling, is too apt to make us forget that they are only records and depositories, and not themselves human knowledge and thought. In other words, they are books and not men; and yet many people treat them as human or rather superhuman. Let a man, however expert, make a statement and our natural thought is "it is probably so, for

he ought to know;" let the same man make the same statement in a book, and many say, "it is so, for it is so written." To such the contradictions between printed statements are absolutely inexplicable.

While conflicting, inaccurate, and erroneous statements of fact are among the most obvious defects of books they are by no means the only ones that affect library work. However freely the heart of the poet is expressed in his works, or the devotion of the saint, or the fervor of the reformer, we often feel that there has been the reservation or omission of something which could help to complete their message to us. Even if it were not so we would still miss that sense of companionship which can come only from personal intercourse. There are times for all of us when we are like the little girl who was not satisfied to have God and the angels watching her while going to sleep. She wanted "somebody with a skin face." Now a book may have a skin back, but it does not have a skin face.

This lack of direct contact with the author when personal sympathy is needed is indeed one of the most serious limitations of the use of books, but after all in library work it is largely a personal matter. The librarian should always have it in mind in his suggestions of books to readers, and undoubtedly the ability and readiness to sympathize with the feelings of those who consult him are among the most valuable traits of the ideal librarian, but even the ideal librarian is not expected to interpret all books to all men. On the other hand, the considerations advanced are not without their practical side. Much of the success of the special children's librarians is due to the combination of this personal element with reading. The work with the blind must offer similar opportunities, and it is quite possible that a development of lecture work in connection with libraries, somewhat as in England, may furnish means of reaching wider circles of readers.

With regard to other classes of litera-

ture the limitations caused by the character of book knowledge affect library work much more directly. Many people believe that the law can be determined, an education acquired, diseases healed, and engines built from the information to be gained by a consultation of books. It is possible that some of these things can be done by a careful study of books alone, but I for one should hesitate to consult a lawyer or physician, or to have my home built by an architect or builder so educated, and I am sure if I ever have an automobile I shall not employ a chauffeur who has to consult a book to find what to do in an emergency, or if I ever keep house, that I shall not employ a cook whose whole knowledge comes from cook-books. If the estimate of book-knowledge as sufficient in itself were held by the ignorant alone it would not require mention here. It is, however, wide-spread, held by persons of good education, and especially apt to establish itself insidiously in the minds of those who have much to do with books. For instance, a recent critic of American library methods, amid much that was true in regard to the failure of the average public library to appeal to men, makes the statement that if the library furnished the books published by the various correspondence schools, the readers would be saved the payment of the school fees. I hold no brief for the correspondence schools, considering them unsatisfactory and expensive substitutes for real schools, but I am sure that their undeniable success is not due to their books, but to the personal guidance which they furnish. Especially, however, in the daily work of the reference desk with the thousand and one questions of detail, are librarians in great danger of forgetting that man does not learn by books alone.

The problem thus presented—how to provide the personal assistance required for the proper interpretation of books, and necessary as their complement—is one of the chief problems of library administration. Among the factors to be considered

are the different kinds of this assistance which may be necessary or useful, the amount of each, and their relations to the other branches of library work, more especially to the cataloging staff. The latter are often accused, and sometimes with justice, of making a fetish of their system, and of forgetting the real purposes of a catalog. However carefully and skillfully constructed, the best catalog is a tool which many readers have not learned to use, which some can never learn to use, and which, even in the hands of an expert, cannot be made to do some kinds of work. On the other hand, there should never be among librarians discussion of the question whether a good catalog is to be preferred to a good reference librarian, or the reverse. Every library should have the best it can get of each.

One of the most notable features of American libraries is their diversity. The twenty-eight preceding conferences of the A. L. A. have not brought about a deadening uniformity of methods, nor even absolute identity of aims. It is not to be expected that the twenty-ninth conference will have, nor do we want it to have, any more effect in those directions. The problems just stated have been and will continue to be solved by different libraries in different ways, or at least by different adaptations, if the ideas are the same.

For instance, Dr Poole's solution, exemplified in the Newberry library of Chicago, lay in the adaptation of the departmental system, so common in university and college libraries, to the public library. There are, however, at least two serious objections to it. It is possible, though not always easy, to divide the books satisfactorily into departments, but it is not possible to divide the readers to correspond. The other objection is the excessive cost of the plan in comparison with the results obtained. To carry it out properly the person or persons in charge of each department should be specialists, competent to furnish the assistance needed by readers, and paid as such. Moreover, any such division into

departments cannot fail to be uneconomical, giving at times too much or too little assistance without a ready method of adjustment.

Independently of the division of the library into departments, it is sometimes urged by readers that the regular library staff ought to include specialists who could give this assistance. The sufficient answer to this plan is that the number of the staff would be legion. You may remember that the specialist said to the Poet at the Breakfast Table that no man could be truly called an entomologist; the subject was too vast for any single human intelligence to grasp. He himself was often spoken of as a coleopterist, but he had no right to so comprehensive a name. If he could prove himself worthy of the name of scarabæist, his highest ambition would be more than satisfied. On this basis even eight assistant reference librarians for entomology and eighty for zoology would not be enough. If this calculation is thought entertaining rather than pertinent to the work of most public libraries, please consider if the difficulty does not exist in other branches of every day use. Is any library likely to obtain the services of a scholar of really expert knowledge in both French and English literature, or in English literature of the periods both of Chaucer and Tennyson, or even of Shakespeare and Pope; or in theology, in Catholic and Protestant literature, or in education, in primary, secondary and higher education? Though the departmental arrangement either of library or staff does not appear to offer a solution of the problem, it may be that this can be obtained by a development of the methods at present in use. In the first place, the regular staff should be so selected and trained that the cases requiring special assistance will be comparatively few. This is much easier of accomplishment than might be supposed. By far the greater number of readers are not in need of the assistance of experts—in deed might easily be hindered by it—but a large proportion do need the per-

sonal assistance of experienced and sympathetic reference librarians. This work should be the first care of any public library. Even if it be granted that the special demands are the more important individually, or those of the delivery desk more important numerically, the principle of the *best* reading for the *greatest* number calls for the consideration of the regular reference work first. The details will vary with the special conditions of each library. The essentials are that this regular work shall be considered of prime importance, put under the charge of the most competent assistants, and concentrated so far as possible in one place. The chief librarian ought to know how it is being done, and should be prepared when necessary to superintend it or even to do some part of it.

When the necessary attention has been given to the regular work with readers there will be found to occur cases where the resources of the staff or of the library or of both will be insufficient. The first point, and an essential one, is that these cases shall be recognized when met. The justice of some of the criticisms of public library work is due to our failure to determine when personal assistance rather than books is needed, and when the personal assistance cannot be obtained in the library.

As a possible solution of the problem of these exceptional cases there may be suggested the formation of relations between the library and a number of scholars who will when needed serve the library as a corps of special reference librarians. Such a corps is at hand for college and reference libraries, though it may be doubted if the relations of library and the corps of instructors are always as intimate or as useful as they might be made. Likewise a public library which has relations similar to those which the Carnegie library of Pittsburgh has with the Carnegie institute, has at hand such a staff, and all the public libraries which are officially connected with museums have at least a portion of one.

Most of us, however, are not so fortunate as to have these connections. Yet something can be done by all public libraries. Those which are in college towns ought to be able to enlist the services of the professors or instructors; the larger public libraries can afford to offer retainers to secure the advice of specialists, and in the future even the smallest can apply to A. L. A. headquarters. We may look forward to the time when the Association will be able to supply, so far as can be supplied by correspondence, the personal advice and criticism which the members may need for these special cases.

That the solutions thus outlined are imperfect is a matter of course. These suggestions are not put forward as a royal road to success, to be trod without effort and without deviation. While it would be unprofitable to dwell on the objections as they are apt to be magnified by contemplation, yet one or two may be stated briefly. Among the conditions of success which will be difficult to meet is the selection of the men. Then their personal equations must be known, and no cases submitted to them in which their prejudices would be involved too strongly, or at least, their advice must be considered with reference to their points of view. No one who has had to do with a college faculty will doubt the truth of this statement or the difficulty of meeting these conditions. Then the means must be found to pay for the relation either in money or in privileges. Volunteer work is too uncertain to be relied on if it can possibly be avoided.

These principles to which your attention has been called are very simple. Books cannot be used to the best advantage without personal assistance; the regular staff of the library should be competent to render by far the greater part of the assistance, and to recognize in special cases when it cannot do so; for these special cases special provision should be made. There is nothing novel about these principles. They are laid down all through the literature of library economy. For in-

stance, both the April and the May number of "Public Libraries" begins with an article on the subject. Yet it has seemed worth while to present them once more, partly because they are the keynote of the program of this Conference, and partly because though commonplaces of library theory, they are by no means commonplaces of library practice. May the papers and discussions which are to follow help us to put the theory into practice.

Permit me as the librarian of a scientific library to close with a scientific illustration. Library work may be likened unto the distribution of electrical energy. Just as the electric company is ready to furnish its current wherever, in whatever quantity and for whatever purpose its customers desire, so the public library should be ready to develop its work both in quantity and kind. Just as the electrical engineer is bound not to use insufficient conductors with their danger of short circuits, nor excessively large ones with their unjustifiable cost, so the library staff should be carefully proportioned to the work it has to do. Finally, just as the wastage of the electric current is a most serious fault of an installation, so is the loss of energy in a library which attempts to do with books alone what they cannot do.

The SECRETARY presented the  
**REPORT OF THE COUNCIL**

(See Transactions of the Council, p. 298)

J. I. WYER, Jr., read the

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY**

The regular reports of officers and committees, which will be presented to the Association at this meeting, will be concerned as usual with special, separate subjects and departments of its work. It seems fitting that besides these numerous analytical and specialized presentations covering specific activities which the Association has in hand, there should be each year, a supplementary and eclectic report, appropriately perhaps from the secretary, which in addition to narrating the transac-